

Women and Food Sovereignty: Gendered Perspectives from Chaupiuno, Bolivia

by

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Abstract

Food sovereignty questions the current economic and social power structures which shape the global food production and distribution system, and advocates for control at the local or domestic level. A key determining factor for the successful implementation of food sovereignty is increased gender equality. However a considerable amount of uncertainty exists in respect to this relationship – uncertainty regarding how to execute the gender empowerment process and uncertainty as to how gender empowerment will manifest for a more food sovereign future. This thesis project explores the relationship between food sovereignty and women's empowerment through the experiences of seven women who have engaged in a goat cheese commercialization project in Chaupiuño, Bolivia.

Keywords: Food Sovereignty; Gender Empowerment; Women in Development; Campesinos; Place Based/Asset Based Development

Dedication

I lovingly dedicate this to the women of Chaupiuno who have been a constant source of inspiration and hope.

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to

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1. Chapter One

1.1. Introduction

In this thesis project I introduce and discuss the concept of food sovereignty. Food sovereignty questions the current economic and social power structures which shape the global food production and distribution system, and advocates for control at the local or domestic level. Although the concept of food sovereignty is relatively new (introduced by *La Vía Campesina* in 1996) it has been adopted into the constitutions of several countries, including Bolivia's in 2009.

A key determining factor, as identified by the literature, for the successful implementation of food sovereignty is increased gender equality. However, despite this scholarly declaration, a considerable amount of uncertainty exists in respect to this relationship – uncertainty regarding how to execute the gender empowerment process and uncertainty as to how gender empowerment will manifest for a more food sovereign future. In the interest of elucidating more clearly, this thesis investigates the relationship between a national food sovereignty discourse and gender empowerment. This thesis asks how food sovereignty, as a national goal, facilitates gender equality, and how this in turn advances Bolivia towards a more food sovereign future.

The outcomes of this research were initially surprising. First, although food sovereignty was enshrined as a constitutional right in 2009, it remains yet to be implemented as a state goal and, as such, the term 'food sovereignty' has not entered into the Bolivian lexicon. In addition, it appears that particular food sovereignty principles are being sacrificed for large scale agricultural modernization, as evidenced by the passing of Law 144 which permits the cultivation of genetically modified organisms. Currently, there is little evidence to suggest a food sovereignty discourse exists at the national level. Faced with this initial finding, I was not able to test this research question

in the way I had originally envisioned it; I was not able to analyze the role of national food sovereignty discourse in processes of gender empowerment.

Despite this initial finding, I was able to work with a department level Non Governmental Organization (NGO) called *El Instituto de Investigación y Capacitación Campesina*¹ (IICCA), and although IICCA did not explicitly engage with food sovereignty discourses, as a 'campesino empowerment NGO' their principles and actions (seed sovereignty, rural community building, agroecology, and women's empowerment) are highly accordant with those put forth by La Via Campesina and the food sovereignty literature. Therefore I argue it is possible to substitute IICCA's development work for the national food sovereignty discourse I had originally hoped to study. Thus, I ultimately applied the original research question via a case study in the small community of Chaupiuno, where women have mobilized, with the assistance of IICCA, to expand and commercialize their traditional goat cheese production in order to generate incomes and increase their economic autonomy.

In the research site of Chaupiuno, I was able to collect empirical data, and situate these within feminist development theory; a contentious field which both heralds and disputes women's specific economic development projects. Specifically, I have chosen to situate my empirical findings within the competing debates surrounding gender mainstreaming. In doing this, it is my hope that I am able to draw out my own argument regarding the efficacy of such projects for achieving empowered gender relations.

I will ultimately argue that despite this project's coherence with linear modernization norms and its inattention to the social structures which perpetuate inequality, measures of gender empowerment can be seen as a result of this project, measures such as increased agency, resources, and achievements. I will argue, though, that these outcomes were attainable for this specific project due to its scale and its culturally embedded nature. This project is impressively small scale in its nature (a ratio

¹ The Merriam Webster dictionary defines campesino as "a native of a Latin American rural area; especially a Latin American farmer or peasant".

of 2:7 for NGO staff to project participants), and this close proximity between the NGO facilitators and the participants has enabled the project to circumnavigate many of the shortcomings faced by similar projects implemented on large scales.

I will also argue that this increase in gender empowerment does assist in creating a more food sovereign future for Bolivia. With my empirical data I identify two mechanisms through which this occurs. First, the generation of income for a family member (the wife) who previously did not garner a wage, results in a greater overall family income, as well as increased income stability. This makes it viable for campesino families to remain in their rural communities, as opposed to looking for work in under serviced urban settlements. This stems out migration, a trend which has been cited as a tremendously deleterious factor impinging on food sovereignty's success.

The second mechanism through which women's empowerment advances towards a more food sovereign future is, as predicted by the literature, increasing the wife's personal income – as opposed to simply increasing the husband's income – promptly produces improved human development outcomes for the entire family.

1.2. Structure and Outline

Following the introductory chapter of this paper, the second chapter provides the background information required to navigate this thesis. The chapter will open with a wide scope, briefly analyzing the historical and geographical factors which are necessary to contextualize Bolivia's current social and political situation. Following this will be an overview of Bolivia's shift away from the neoliberal development model, and towards the *buen vivir* model, which inspired the rewriting of the constitution in 2009 by *EI Movimiento Al Socialismo's* (MAS) Evo Morales. Here I will outline the specific constitutional articles which address food sovereignty.

In the second part of the second chapter I will narrow the scope of the background to the level of the case study site, Chaupiuno. I will discuss the history and demographics of the region, and address the challenges this community has faced as a result of rural under development. I will then introduce the goat cheese

commercialization project. I will explain how it emerged, who participates, and discuss the involvement of the local NGO (IICCA) which has assisted the community.

In the third chapter, I will provide a literature review followed by the research question, and then the selected theoretical frame and data collection methodology. The literature review provides an overview of the evolution of hunger alleviation strategies, and draws out the rationale for the food sovereignty approach. After providing a basic understanding of the principles and roots of the food sovereignty movement, I will discuss the importance of gender empowerment, specifically, how gender inequality and patriarchal norms serve as impediments to the implementation of food sovereignty. This discussion is particularly important, as it is within these literature contexts that I situate my research question.

In the final part of the chapter I will briefly discuss feminist development theories, and select the most appropriate sub-field for my analytic framework. Finally, I will detail the qualitative methodologies used, and give rationale for their use in this particular research setting.

In the fourth chapter I will provide a discussion and analysis of my empirical findings. In the first part of the chapter I will specifically focus on whether this project produces empowerment outcomes for women; in the second part of the chapter I will add to the existing literature surrounding gender empowerment's utility for food sovereignty, as I will identify two mechanisms through which gender empowerment in Chaupiuno produces improved food sovereignty outcomes.

In the fifth and final chapter I will simply attempt to draw together the findings presented in this paper, and conclude.

2. Chapter Two

2.1. Background

2.1.1. *National Scope*

Bolivia is one of the poorest countries in Latin America. In the interest of statistics, Bolivia ranks 108th on the UNDP Human Development Index with a medium development score of 0.663. This places it below the Latin American and Caribbean average. *El Instituto Nacional de Estadística* (de Bolivia) estimates that 51% of Bolivia's 2009 population lived in conditions of poverty, with an urban incidence of 43.55% and a rural incidence of 66.43%.

Poverty rates in Bolivia, as well as current social and political landscapes, are deeply connected to its unique geography, demography and history. It would be amiss to begin this thesis project without – at least briefly – discussing these important contextualizing issues.

2.1.2. *Geography*

Given that this research is interested in food sovereignty, it is particularly salient to review Bolivia's unparalleled geography and climate. Few countries rival Bolivia when it comes to diversity and extremes of climate and topography. Although situated in the latitudes of the tropics, Bolivian society exists at some of the highest altitudes in the world, rivaled only by those in the Himalayans.

Civilization in Bolivia began in the altiplano, which is known for poor soil, and dry cold climates; as such the flora and fauna have evolved to meet these requirements. Bolivia's domestic food potential is vast. The US National Research Council (NRC) released a report entitled 'Lost Crops of the Incas' which states that, at the point of conquest, the Incas cultivated as many crops as European and Asian farmers combined

(up to 70 known plant domestications) – enough food to feed 15 million people (NRC 1989: 1). Today, Bolivia's population numbers approximately 10 million (Census 2001).

2.1.3. Colonial History

The extent to which European colonization is responsible for the degradation of colonized nations is well established and does not bear an in depth discussion here (see Mahoney 2003 for post colonial legacies in Latin America; and McEwan 2009 for general post colonialism and development studies). However, in the interest of this specific investigation, it is worthwhile to trace the degradation of the food production system in Bolivia to its colonial roots.

Food insecurity was not an issue in the Andean region prior to colonization. The NRC report explains, “store houses overflowed with grains and dried tubers. Because of the Inca's productive agriculture and remarkable public organizations it was usual to have 3-7 years' supply of food in storage” (1989: 1). However, almost immediately after colonization this agricultural abundance was lost, as “[b]oth Crown and Church prized silver and souls – not plants” (1989: 2).

Bolivia's agricultural potential is evidently impressive, but continues to be stifled due to various factors such as poor policy choices in the past (this will be discussed in more detail in the history section), a challenging geography, an underdeveloped national transportation network (in 2009 the World Bank estimated that less than 8% of Bolivia's roads are paved) and more increasingly important (with droughts connected to climate change) limited access to water (Assies 2003 and IICCA 2012).

2.1.4. Independence

After more than 250 years of extractive elitist colonialism, Bolivians won their independence on August 6th, 1825 (Klein 2011). However, Bolivia's post-independence road has not been an easy one. Beatriz Fantini states that “Bolivia has gone down in history as the country that had more revolutions than years of independence” (2012: 4), and this political turbulence weakened Bolivia's fragile resource based economy. In 1984 (after twenty years of Banzer's despotic control) Bolivia faced its worst economic crisis, with hyper-inflation “increasing over 50% each month” (Klein 2011: 241).

During this time, Bolivia received considerably guidance and aid from the United States, and this relationship played a crucial role in shaping how Bolivia responded to the economic crisis. Susan Spronk explains,

The response to the crisis was an “orthodox shock” therapy program designed by Jeffrey Sachs, then an advisor to the International Monetary Fund, and implemented by the Bolivian state. The “New Economic Policy” (NEP) was much more than an economic policy. It was, in fact, nothing less than a new ideological and philosophical framework to redefine Bolivia’s future economic, social, and political choices. (2007: 10)

Agriculture, like many sectors, was hurt by the NEP. Citing Toro (1992) and Morales (1992) Harry Sanabrina explains, “neoliberal policies relegated peasant production to an “economically marginal” role, favoring instead commodities produced by well-capitalized farmers and agroindustrial groups (1999: 539). In conjunction with decreased governmental support during this period, small producers began competing with increasingly cheap imported products (as a result of the liberalized trade barriers). Peasant production waned, and as a result, “agricultural production [in Bolivia] fell by seventeen percent between 1985 and 1988” (Sanabrina 1999: 539).

Large scale civilian discontent emerged in response to the NEP, perhaps most famously though, the selling of Cochabamba’s water supply to Bechtel in 2000 (Assies 2003). This incensed a period of serious civilian uprising and activism, which ultimately culminated with the election of MAS’ Evo Morales to the presidency in 2005.

2.1.5. *Bolivia’s Turn Left*

One of Morales’ first major acts in office was to rewrite the national constitution. On January 25, 2009, Bolivians approved the new constitution by a majority vote of 61% (Rousseau 2011). *La Nueva Constitución Política Del Estado* (NCPE) heralded a deliberate shift away from the past, and was called by Morales as the making of a ‘New Bolivia’. The NCPE was created with the help of diverse array of political groups, NGOs, and citizen proposals. It was described as an attempt to “roll back half a millennium of colonialism, discrimination and humiliation” (Taylor 2009: np).

The NCPE is expansive, and incorporates the indigenous philosophy of *buen vivir* (living well) (NCPE: Article 8). This concept represents a new approach for national development, one which fundamentally respects and prioritizes the rights of the *PachaMama* (Quechua for Mother Earth) over international trade and external interests. The Bolivian state became recognized as belonging to its people, and as such the new constitution guarantees basic human rights such as universal access to water and food (NCPE: Article 16), universal health care (NCPE: Article 18), universal housing (NCPE: Article 19) and provision of basic services such as sewage, electricity, the post system, and gas (NCPE: Article 20).

Universal access to food was an ambitious goal, as food insecurity at the time was a pressing issue in Bolivia. Estimates made in 2008 by the World Food Program suggest that 44% of Bolivian municipalities (almost half of Bolivia's population) presented with severe or highly severe levels of food insecurity (2008: 15). The strategy put forth though, to achieve universal access to food, was the strategy of food sovereignty.

The constitution guarantees:

Article 255.8 "[f]ood security and sovereignty for the entire population; the prohibition of importation, production and trade of genetically modified organisms and toxic elements that harm health and the environment"; and

Article 401.7 "food sovereignty and food security, prioritizing the production and consumption of food products produced within the Bolivian territory".

Please see appendix 1 for a complete listing of all articles related to food sovereignty.

2.2. Regional Scope

2.2.1. *Tarija and El Instituto de Investigación y Capacitación Campesina (IICCA)*

IICCA is located in the south-eastern part of the country, in the department of Tarija. Tarija is regarded as being one of the most hospitable regions in Bolivia, with a mean elevation of 2135 meters (El Instituto Nacional de Estadística 2010). Tarija is also widely considered to be home to a wealthier demographic, and during my field research I had many casual conversations with locals about their fears regarding the increase of internal migration, which has brought migrants from the altiplano, near La Paz, to Tarija in search of work. There was a slight xenophobia attached to these conversations, as *Chapacos* (slang for someone from Tarija) worried about how this influx would affect their traditional ways and customs.

In the midst of this relative affluence, one region of the department continues to present with substantially lower human development indicators, not only in relation to the department, but with the country overall (Bohrt 2009). *La Mancomunidad de los Héroes de la Independencia* (Mancomunidad) was created in 1998 as part of a joint development project between four neighboring municipalities (Yunchará, Puente, Uriondo, and San Lorenzo). This collaborative effort was born out of the desire to improve agricultural and economic opportunities by pooling resources (Bohrt 2009 and IICCA 2012).

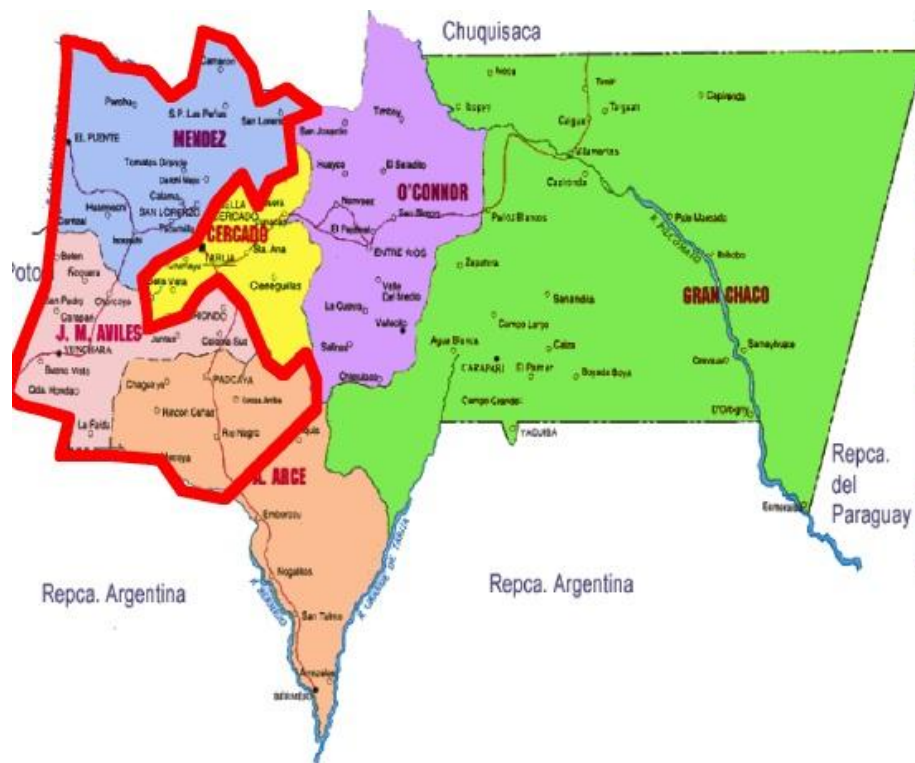


Figure 1. Map of the Department of Tarija with La Mancomunidad in Red. Adapted from Atlas Bolivia (CIMA). Available online at www.mirabolivia.com/

In contrast to the fertile valle of Ciudad Tarija, large portions of the Mancomunidad are situated at the less hospitable altitude of 3,500 - 4,000 meters (Bohrt 2009), and the region is populated by campesinos, historically poor agricultural labourers from the hacienda era. In part with the sweeping land reforms in 1952 (Malloy 1971), many of campesinos were granted land rights, and this land reform laid the foundation for most of the Mancomunidad communities today.

Geographically remote, these communities are only accessible from the city via a dangerous single lane dirt road (nicknamed *Camino de los Muertos*) through the Cordillera Sama Mountain Range. This region is so remote, and 'underdeveloped' that it continues to exist within the confines of a nature reserve (SERNAP).

The Mancomunidad is severely marginalized in terms of access to resources. Many communities do not have basic services such as electricity or plumbing, and economic opportunities have been few. This has led to significant out migration in the past two decades and as a result, many Mancomunidad communities have become

decrepit and further isolated as human and cultural capital continues to exit. The chart below details the level of marginalization that the Mancomunidad faces.

Principle Social Indicators for the Mancomunidad (% of the population)

Municipality	Housing		Services and Supplies		Education Insufficiency	Health Inadequacies
	Inadequate housing materials	Insufficient housing space	Inadequate water and sanitation services	Inadequate supply of energy		
<u>Aviléz</u> Uriondo Yunchará	60.1%	66.8%	60.7%	91.3%	87.3%	26%
<u>Mendez</u> El Puente San Lorenzo	64.5%	68.1%	50.1%	83.5%	86.2%	38.2%

Figure 2 Adapted from INE Censo 2001. The original chart in Spanish can be seen in Appendix 3

Gender inequality is also an issue in the Mancomunidad; with women presenting with much higher rates of illiteracy than men (figure 3 below). Rates of illiteracy for women are twice as high as they are for men. Hunger rates are also pervasive across the Mancomunidad. Figure 4 (below) details that in 2004, each municipality in the Mancomunidad presented with a *brecha* or gap of close to 30% of their recommended caloric daily intake.

Nivel de analfabetismo en la Mancomunidad Héroes de la Independencia

Municipio	Número de Analfabetos		% Total de Anal-fabetismo
	Mujer	Hombre	
San Lorenzo	3.620	1.552	28.5
El Puente	3.839	1.646	41.4
Uriondo	2.043	876	25.0
Yunchará	2.186	937	50.1

Fuente: Diagnósticos Municipales 2001.

Figure 3. Illiteracy rates in the Mancomunidad (Bohrt 2009: 22)

Grado de adecuación del consumo de calorías en la Mancomunidad de Municipios Héroes de la Independencia (2004)

Municipios	Aporte de calorías de acuerdo a la ingesta de alimentos	Recomendación del consumo de calorías	Grado de adecuación de nutrientes	Brecha
Uriondo	1.491,86	2.164,63	70.80	- 29,20
Yunchará	1.409,02	2.138,46	66,51	- 33,49
San Lorenzo	1.444,01	2.196,84	66,19	- 33,81
El Puente	1.589,45	2.228,83	72,20	- 27,80
Tarija	1.484,00	2.188,99	68,71	- 31,29

Fuente: IICCA/AIPE. Seguridad alimentaria nutricional y desarrollo económico local. Tarija 2005.

Figure 4 Adequacy of calorie consumption (Bohrt 2009: 19)

IICCA is a small scale *Tarijeña* NGO. They are financed through a Catholic organization from Spain, called *Manos Unidas*, although this has not always been the case. Funding sources seem to change periodically, and IICCA is required to write grant applications for their operating budget. The religious mandate of the funding organization does not seem to play a large role in dictating IICCA's project plans.

IICCA has been working with campesinos for over thirty years on issues relating to rural community development, campesino empowerment, and agroecology. IICCA's most recent project *Construyendo Dignidad* strives to foster social and economic development in the Mancomunidad, across the goals of food security and income generation, through a variety of small community focused projects utilizing asset based, community place-based, and sustainable development strategies.

2.2.2. Chaupiuno

The research site, Chaupiuno, is a small Mancomunidad settlement, located in the *Cabecera de Valle Seco*, Municipality Puente (CIAC). The community has been particularly devastated in recent years by drought and adverse economic opportunities, a situation which has resulted in significant outmigration. Currently only seven families remain in the community.

The central economic pursuit of this community has always been small market farming by the men (mostly root vegetables) and goat rearing by the women. Although the surrounding environment of the community is dry and challenging to cultivate, the small shrubbery and legume trees have provided the ideal feed for the 1,400 goats owned by the community (each family has a herd of approximately 200 goats). Thus, the women in this community have been producing goat cheese for consumption and limited road side sales for as long as they can remember.

Recognizing the potential within the assets of the goats and the cheese production culture, IICCA approached the women in 2010, with a proposal to work together to expand production, with the ultimate goal of providing a viable livelihood for the families of Chaupiuno. Developing this project with women **only** was a deliberate choice, as it was seen as an opportunity to also increase gender equality through women's economic empowerment.

Strategies to improve production have included: modern equipment (where as previously the women used rudimentary tools such as rocks to press the cheese), higher milk yielding goat breeds, workshops/courses related to production strategy, community exchanges with other goat cheese producers, and most importantly, the construction for

each producer of a *queseria*, a small room located off the side of their house which was designed and built specifically for the hygienic production of cheese.

Embedded within this project are also mechanisms to facilitate personal goal setting and target yields. Upon acceptance of the partnership with IICCA (and acceptance of all the equipment and knowledge transfer), each individual producer commits to producing a certain number of kilos of cheese (a quantity higher than previously produced) to be sold in the IICCA organics shop. A portion of the increased profits are put towards the cost of the equipment, and the rest goes to the producer. The women also continue on with their traditional road side sales.

How Successful is the Cheese Project?
During the period of June 2011 – December 2011 a register was established to collect data on how much cheese was produced in the community of Chaupiuno. During this period, 2193 Kilos of cheese was produced to be sold in the IICCA organics shop. This shop is located in a relatively affluent part of the city centre, and as such the cheese sold well at the price of 25Bs per half kilo and 50Bs per kilo. This equates to \$3.58 and \$7.17 respectively.
Total gross sales: $2193 * \$7.17 =$ \$15,723.81
Average monthly gross income: $\$15,723.81 / 6 =$ \$2620.63
Average monthly individual gross income: $\$2620.63 / 7 =$ \$374.37
Of course this is just an average, and every month a certain percent of the income (approximately 10%) would be kept to recoup the cost of the infrastructure upgrades. However, a monthly net salary of \$325 dollars in the Mancomunidad is quite substantial (76.6% of the population in the Mancomunidad earns less than a \$140 per month (Bohrt 2009: 19). As a note, the women were selling small amounts of cheese prior to the project's inception, however the price they sold it for was significantly less, and sales only numbered one or two per week on the side of the highway. There is not an official stand by the side of the highway, rather people who are familiar with the cheese simply stop and walk up to the community to purchase it.

3. Chapter Three

3.1. Literature Review

In conjunction with the contextualizing background review provided in the previous chapter, I believe it is important to discuss the evolution of food sovereignty, and highlight the most prominent principles which constitute the movement. This is necessary to fully situate the research question, and give rationale for the selected theoretical framework and analysis.

3.1.1. *Evolution of the Response to Global Hunger – Food Aid*

In 1965 the World Food Program (WFP) was established as a permanent part of the UN system. The mandate of this organization has been, and remains: “a vision of the world in which every man, woman and child has access at all times to the food needed for an active and healthy life” (WFP: 2012).

The central strategy of the WFP has included emergency and non emergency direct food aid drops and feeding programs in countries of need, and the WFP remains the most prominent food aid organization to this day.

Unfortunately, despite decades of intervention, the WFP has not been able to ensure universal access to food, as demonstrated by consistently high rates of global hunger. In fact, in the years since its inception, food aid has generated a significant amount of criticism. John Weeks describes food aid as the most controversial form of development assistance, and states “for food aid, there is no consensus it should exist at all” (1997: 337).

Critics of food aid charge that programs like the WFP actually exacerbate hunger (Fitzpatrick and Storey 1989), as local agricultural production has been shown to

decrease as a result of the free or cheap, subsidized imports. Weeks continues this critique, stating, “food aid is not aid at all for the most part, but a vehicle for supporting agricultural producers in developed countries” (1997: 337).

In addition, the basic basket of food supplied through the WFP to recipient countries has been deemed, at times, culturally inappropriate. In their experience in Senegal, Tabara Nydiaye and Mariami Outtara attest that “[r]ather than developing local agriculture to support the population, the state accepted donations from other countries to stave off famine. The cereals and rice that were brought in, however, were of varieties that the people in Casamance had never seen before, and so they were not easily able to use them... Such intervention can be extremely costly and have little or no tangible effect on lessening a crisis” (2011: 59).

3.1.2. *Evolution of the Response to Global Hunger – Food Security*

As rates of hunger escalated into a global food shortage in 1974, a major effort was made at the World Food Conference (held by the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) in Rome) to reframe attitudes towards hunger and hunger alleviation strategies. Madeline Fairbairn articulates this as a departure from the ‘post war food regime’ (2010: 22) and explains that the new hunger alleviation philosophy believed “‘reasonable prices’ must be ensured without hindrance from natural, political or economic circumstances” (2010: 22).

In the decades following this initial declaration, food security has evolved to become the central analytic framework for global hunger, and over the years has become a multi-faceted and multi-definitional concept (Smith *et al* 1992 via Gallegos 2012). The most widely accepted definition, however, arrived in 1996 when the FAO (at the World Food Summit) agreed to the following definition, that “[f]ood security, at the individual, household, national, regional, and global levels [is achieved] when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life” (Patel 2012: 1).

This food security paradigm evolved in tandem with neoliberalism, and approached hunger as an international and macroeconomic problem. This vein of

thinking increasingly began to view food products as commodities. Fairbairn draws attention to the 1993 World Bank report entitled *Overcoming Global Hunger*, which states clearly, “food is a commodity. Access to it is largely a function of income or asset distribution, as well as the functioning of food production and marketing systems. From this perspective, access to food is governed by the same factors that govern access to any other commodity” (2010: 25). The trend towards commoditization and globalization of food products also served to depress local food production. Nations were counselled to “refrain from costly self sufficiency policies and specialize in producing the commodities which are most profitable” (World Bank 1996: 1).

But what happened? Although the food security paradigm has been accepted and implemented almost unanimously since the early 1980s, the world suffered from the effects of another global food crisis between 2006 and 2008. Bello and Baviera explain that this occurred as commodity prices spiraled “beyond the reach of a vast number of people” (2010: 62).

The reality persists: both food aid and the commoditization of food have done little to address the root problems which create hunger. As Raj Patel aptly notes, despite popular belief, hunger is not a result of ‘lack of food’ (2012: 1). Citing Amartya Sen’s seminal work, Patel explains that in the majority of cases of widespread famine related deaths (which have occurred since WWII); food has actually been available within the region of famine. Patel thus argues, “[q]uestions about hunger and its attendant pathologies therefore, ought to begin with questions about social and political configurations around *power* over food, rather than about the mere presence or absence of food in the vicinity of a hungry individual” (original emphasis 2012:1). Through this understanding, Patel argues, “if governments aim merely for food security as a policy goal, the politically difficult questions of inequality in power that produced food insecurity would be ignored, and a broken system would be patched up with entitlements” (2012: 2).

3.1.3. *The Emergence of Food Sovereignty*

Conceptualizing hunger as a result of social and economic inequality has given way to a new epistemic field of knowledge surrounding food and food production. Food

sovereignty, as a movement, initially emerged through the grassroots organization of the international peasant's group La Via Campesina, and was first introduced in 1996 at The Second International Conference in Tlaxcala, Mexico (Wittman 2010: 2). La Via Campesina "argue[s] that current and linked, food and economic and environmental crises are in fact the direct result of decades of destructive economic policies based on the globalization of a neoliberal, industrial, capital intensive and corporate led model of agriculture" (in Wittman 2010: 2).

Although the exact definition of food sovereignty remains, as Patel explains, "an evolving and many faceted term" (2012: 2) he acknowledges "an invariant core: 'communities have the right to define their own food and agricultural policy'" (2012: 2). This basic definition is also echoed by Wittman, who states, "[f]ood sovereignty, broadly defined, [is] the rights of nations and peoples to **control** their own food systems, including their own markets, production modes, food cultures and environments" (emphasis added 2010: 2).

Given that this movement is decidedly heterogeneous, its advocates work towards "convergence in diversity" (Amin 2011: xvii). But what exactly does a food sovereignty model look like? The literature highlights specific action, including: resistance to agrofuel production (Bello and Baviera 2010; Holt Gimenez and Shattuck 2010), implementation of agroecological practices (Wittman 2010; Altieri 2010; Altieri 2009; De Schutter 2011), campaigns to secure seed sovereignty (Wittman 2010; Bezner Kerr 2010; Kloppenburg 2010; McMichael 2010), equitable redistribution of land (Borras and Franco 2010; Holt-Giménez 2011; Rosset 2008), a strengthening of the small producer/peasant sector (Bello and Baviera 2010; Borras Jr. and Franco 2010; Altieri 2009; Altieri 2010; Patel 2010), educating the consumer to create food literacy (Montagut 2011; Benítez 2011; Viertel 2011) and reducing systematic social inequalities, particularly gender and race inequalities (Masioli and Nicholson 2010; Patel 2012; Desmarais 2009; Ndiaye and Ouattara 2011; Patel 2011; Ahmadi 2011; Nobre 2011).

3.1.4. *"Without Women There is No Food Sovereignty" (Vivas 2012)*

A particularly pervasive issue which presents from the literature is the requirement to rework traditional gender norms. Since the beginning of La Via

Campesina's organizational efforts, patriarchy has been identified as a significant barrier inhibiting food sovereignty's implementation. La Via Campesina explains, "if we do not create new gender relations, we will not be able to build a new society (La Via Campesina 2008).

This argument goes straight to the heart of the inequalities which underpin the current social structures of the neoliberal food production system. Patel stresses, "[t]he base inequality in power is one that food sovereignty, sometimes, explicitly seeks to address. And it is here, in challenging deep inequalities of power, that I argue we see the core of food sovereignty" (2010: 194). Itelvina Masioli, a La Via Campesina leader, elaborates:

I think that the issue of food sovereignty is tied directly to, and we confront it in, systems of machismo, of violence, of all the patriarchal values. The social movement, the community, has to continue constructing instruments that go on inhibiting all these patriarchal tendencies, while continuing to construct other principles and values from this perspective of new social relations of gender. (2010: 41)

The food sovereignty movement also acknowledges the localized, household impact that women can have on improving conditions of hunger. Critics argue that the important role of women's empowerment is ignored by the current food security paradigm. Marilee Karl explicitly takes issue with this, stating "misguided agricultural and trade policies have contributed to the current food crisis, including the failure to recognise women's crucial roles in agricultural production and household food security" (2009: 8). Ndiaye and Outtara stress the same problem with food security strategies in West Africa, "[t]hese states have defined food security policies. They have established institutions to ensure food security. But they have not paid particular attention to the centrality and contribution of rural women to food security. Rather they tend to ignore to role of rural women" (2011: 55).

La Via Campesina expands further, stating, "women play a key role in food production and procurement, food preparation, family food security and food culture" (in Wittman 2010: 5). Given this integral role women play in family food security, greater control (be it through decision making or greater access to funds) should translate into significantly better hunger alleviation outcomes.

Understanding exactly how to enact this aspect of food sovereignty offers some challenges. Miriam Nobre, international coordinator for the World March for Women, poses a similar query, “[h]ow do we build rights and claims in terms of food sovereignty? And how do we succeed in winning these rights?” (2011: 298). Paul Nicholson, adds to this uncertainty, stating “[c]ertainly women are among the key advocates or pursuers of food sovereignty. That is very clear. But whether, in general, it is thought that food sovereignty is a way of strengthening gender relations, that is another question. I don’t think we’re really aware of that” (in Wittman 2010: 41).

3.2. The Research Question

Positioned within this uncertainty in the literature, this thesis strives to explore the connection between food sovereignty and gender inequality. How do the principles of this movement, which insist on gender equality, create a discourse which in turn reduces patriarchy? How do empowered women facilitate a more food sovereign Bolivia?

3.2.1. *Theoretical Framing*

Although my preliminary research reveals that a food sovereignty discourse does not play a significant role in state or department level actions (see appendix 2 for a more in depth discussion of this finding), the motivations which drive IICCA’s projects are highly accordant with food sovereignty principles, goals such as agroecological production, seed sovereignty, strengthened rural communities, gender empowerment, and reduced systematic inequalities. The effort to facilitate the goat cheese expansion and commercialization effort in Chaupiuno was born out of these motivations and can therefore, I argue, be utilized to provide insight into the relationship between food sovereignty and gender empowerment.

But how is it possible to discern if projects such as the cheese making commercialization in Chaupiuno result in gender empowerment? Is gender empowerment actually occurring, or are women just being further burdened with extra work which has little human development benefit? Beyond that, if in fact this initiative has served to empower women, how does this help to advance towards a more food sovereign future for Bolivia? In order to adequately engage with such questions, I look to

the theoretical potential within feminist development theory, a field which explicitly engages with such queries.

3.2.2. *Feminist Development Theory*

Richard Peet and Elaine Hartwick (2009) explain that feminist development theory first emerged during the second and third waves of feminism, as conversations of inequality, power, and gender began to permeate international development strategies and international development organizations, “so much so that feminist development theory now forms a recognizable system of concepts, discourses, and practices” (241).

However, this recognizable system referenced by Peet and Hartwick is not universally coherent. As diverse as the feminist movement itself, each sub-field differs in their advocacy and strategy, as accordant with their philosophical underpinnings; Peet and Hartwick actually note five major delineations within this field (see figure below). Therefore, in order to utilize existing theoretical suggestions from this field, I believe it is necessary to narrow the analytic scope, and select the field which most aptly connects with the philosophy of the project in Chaupiuno. To do this, I will briefly introduce and discuss each field and then put forth that which is most useful for my empirical analysis.

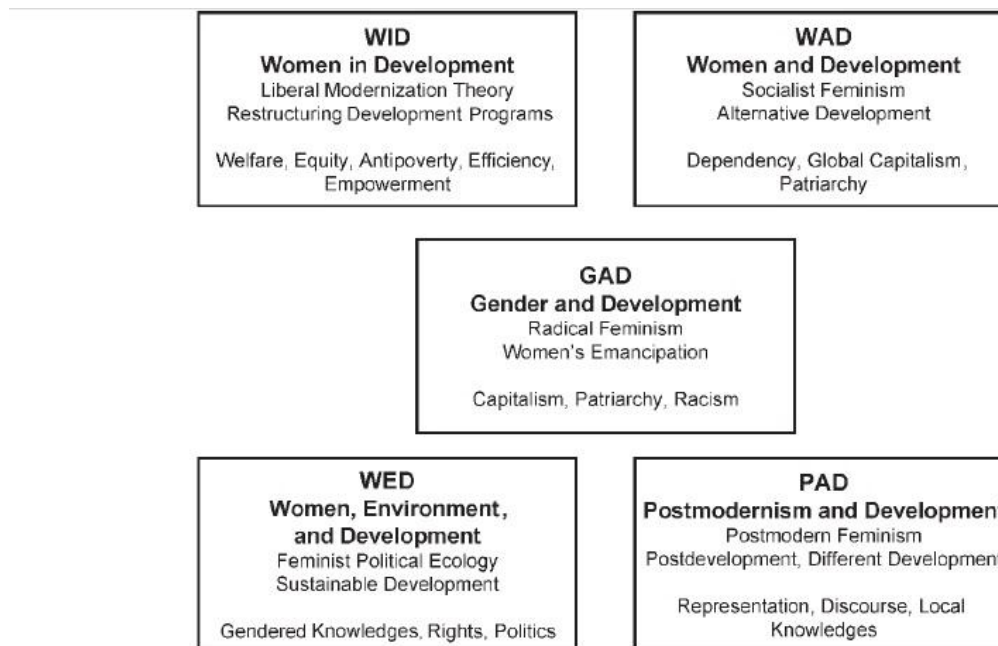


Figure 5 Feminist Development Theories from Peet and Hartwick (2009: 254)

The first development strategy, Women in Development (WID) focuses on integrating women's productive efforts into the market economy in order to decrease poverty. This adheres to the liberal modernization trajectory, and views women's economic integration as the most promising path to human development. This strategy largely works within the current economic system, and equates economic growth with development. The goals of WID are not predicated on transformed or egalitarian gender relations.

Women and Development (WAD) theorizes that feminist development must institute reproductive democracy – shared control over reproductive decisions and family decisions. This school of thinking draws on the work of Marx, and associates the origins of patriarchy with the spread of capitalism. Mariarosa Dalla Costa, in *Women and the Subversion of Community* (1971) argues that wives and mothers are the equivalent of the exploited working class and their surplus is systematically taken by their husbands and used as an instrument of oppression. Dalla Costa explains this system has deeply entrenched women into reproductive roles, and as a society “[w]e assume that all women are housewives and even those who work outside the home continue to be housewives” (np).

The Gender and Development (GAD) theory departs from both WID and WAD in that gender relations and gender identities take the place of 'woman' in development efforts. This theory draws the focus to the variety of experience within the 'woman' category, and discards woman as a one dimensional codifier. This development practice also analyzes the structures and social processes which construct unequal gendered perceptions, particularly at the state or institutional level.

Women, Environment, and Development (WED) places development challenges and ecological destruction squarely on the masculine control of nature. Ecofeminists such as Vandana Shiva explain that the scientific and development goals of the West are not intrinsic, but rather the manifestation of Western Patriarchal motivations to dominate the environment. This feminist development theory works to identify and challenge the masculine power in development projects. In the specific example of food sovereignty, Shiva has criticized corporations such as Monsanto for attempting to own natural biodiversity, for the singular motivation of profit gain.

Postmodernism and Development (PAD) as a feminist development theory, seeks to unite postmodernism with feminist theory. Advocates of PAD consider post modernism's focus on a multiplicity of truths, repudiation of binaries, and its complication of othered identities as advantageous to feminist development theory. PAD questions the utility of Eurocentric feminist development, and suggests this is just a process of creating feminist orientalisms.

3.2.3. *Women in Development and Gender Mainstreaming*

I argue that the field of feminist development theory which most aptly corresponds with the project in Chaupiuno is WID. IICCA has worked to commercialize the women's cheese making skills, with the direct goal of poverty alleviation. IICCA believes that poverty is the one reason for the extraordinarily high rates food insecurity in the Mancomunidad (IICCA 2012) and thus improving rates of poverty will translate into improved outcomes. Consistent with the theorization of WID, IICCA believes women to be a previously untapped financial resource for the families, and the key to hunger alleviation lies in increasing their economic productivity. This project does not seek to redefine traditional gender roles, or question underlying social conceptions.

Not coincidentally, WID is also the most pervasive feminist development theory in international development practice. I argue that this is largely due to WID's potential for improved gross domestic product, a central goal and success metric of development agencies and national governments. The ubiquity of WID in development has ultimately given way to the term 'gender mainstreaming' a widely acclaimed and criticized strategy for empowering women and achieving human development goals.

I intend to engage my empirical findings within this debate – in order to clarify whether gender mainstreaming strategies have utility for gender empowerment goals, and to theorize where the strengths and weaknesses lie in a gender mainstreaming approach. However, before the analysis section, it is useful to contextualize gender mainstreaming, and to detail the contending arguments.

3.2.4. *The Emergence, Implementation, and Contestation of Gender Mainstreaming*

The rise of policy which focused on women's integration into the moneyed economy is largely attributed the work of Esther Boserup (Richey 2001), a Danish agricultural economist who wrote *Women's Role in Economic Development* (1970). In her book, Boserup argued that the unpaid/paid sexual division of labour marginalized women, and reduced income generation potential. Boserup's theory sparked a major paradigmatic shift in the development world, and it became conventional to view women's economic integration as key to improving economic growth and poverty. Lisa Ann Richey states that "development organizations considered women an untapped resource" and theoretically, their participation should increase national productivity by 50% (2001: 188).

This development strategy continued to grow in popularity, leading to the introduction of 'gender mainstreaming' at the 1985 World Conference on Women in Nairobi. Gita Sen, a feminist and development theorist offers an articulate explanation for why this development strategy has appealed so widely to international development agencies. She says,

A gender perspective means recognising that women stand at the crossroads between production and reproduction, between economic activity and the care of human beings, and therefore between

economic growth and human development. They are workers in both spheres – those most responsible and therefore with most at stake, those who suffer most when the two spheres meet at cross-purposes, and those most sensitive to the need for better integration between the two. (in Mathiba-Madibela 2001: 2)

Naila Kabeer postulates that this crossroad between production and reproduction also makes women a much more ‘valuable’ development investment as “evidence shows that improved male earnings does not necessarily lead to an equivalent improvement in the welfare of the family” (2003: 145). She continues that “[m]en are likely to retain a greater percentage of their income for their personal use while women tend to spend a greater percentage of their income on the collective welfare (2003: 165). Kabeer also notes that, “[d]espite the low pay women receive, their economic contributions have been shown to be the single most important element of survival strategy” (2003: 119).

Given these advantages, it is apparent why gender mainstreaming is seen as an attractive development strategy. Several successful development projects have been predicated explicitly on these findings, most famously perhaps, projects such as Bangladesh’s *Grameen Bank* (which extends micro credit loans to groups of women) and conditional cash transfer programs like *Oportunidades* in Mexico (which disperses money to women only).

Despite its widespread implementation, gender mainstreaming has garnered considerable criticism; with some critics particularly questioning gender mainstreaming’s potential for deep systemic change, to actually address the inequalities which disempower women. Rebecca Tiessen, in her book *Everywhere/Nowhere: Gender mainstreaming in development agencies* cautions that too often development agencies have focused on “superficial technical solutions or quick fixes that give the appearance of addressing gender inequality but do not address the causes of inequality or lead to transformative change” (2007: 2). This concern is echoed by Geeta Chowdry and Chandra Mohanty, who challenge that gender mainstreaming is imbued in western liberal market discourses and promotes the “economic, political, social, and cultural privileging of European peoples, [and] homogenizes and essentializes the Third World and the Third World Woman” (Chowdry 1995: 26).

In the Bolivian context, Catherine Hippert argues that gender mainstreaming has not been a functional development tool. Hippert finds currency in Chowdry's essentialized identities argument. Hippert argues that the "poor rural woman [identity] appeals to more holistic understandings of development that are predicated upon the understanding of women's roles as wives and partners in relationships with poor, indigenous men — another vulnerable, but untargeted, group" (2011: 498). Hippert also argues that gender mainstreaming, as employed in Bolivia, pays too little attention to the intersectionality of class, ethnicity and gender, and too much attention to blanket strategies which push women into development projects. This, she concludes, "has had little effect on rural women's lives except to overburden them" (2011: 498). Hippert's finding has also been articulated as the 'double day'. The double day refers to the addition of another day's worth of work loaded onto women in conjunction with their existing unpaid household labour. The double day results in a tremendously skewed distribution of labour.

With this brief theoretical framing of gender mainstreaming, it is possible to see where the potential and contestations lie within the gender mainstreaming development approach. In the following chapter, I aim to analyze my empirical findings within this framework, to theorize how the experience from Chaupiuno can provide insight into this debate, and ultimately whether such a project could be utilized by food sovereignty advocates as a model to increase women's empowerment.

3.3. Methods

Prior to the field work, considerable preliminary reading (a document analysis and literature review) was conducted in order to develop the research question and select an appropriate research site. The field work portion of the research was made possible through an internship with *La Asociación de Institutos de Promoción y Educación* (AIPE), a Bolivian NGO. Through AIPE's assistance and connections, I was able to work closely with IICCA during the period of May 2012 until August 2012. This relationship proved instrumental in allowing me to gain access to the research site, Chaupiuno. Their introduction and 'approval' of me was a fundamental catalyst in building rapport with community members.

Semi structured interviews were conducted with the female heads of house, those directly involved in the cheese project. An interview took place with every family in the community, seven in total. The interviews were conducted in Spanish, with full and informed consent from the participants. I chose a semi structured interviewing style, as this style serves as a 'middle road' between structured and unstructured interviews, thus this method of interviewing "can provide detail, depth, and an insider's perspective, while at the same time allowing hypothesis testing" (McEvoy 2002: 665). The prepared questions pertained to the technical aspects of the productive initiative, as well as the participant's perspectives on various social impacts of the initiative. Questions inquired how the economic initiative had impacted the participant's life, whether the participant believed the increased incomes enabled themselves and their families to eat better, where they procured their food, the participant's knowledge, support and opinion of agro ecology and food sovereignty, and finally the participant's perspectives on gender relations.

Beyond the confines of the semi structured interviews, I also employed participant observation techniques. This method required spending considerable time in the community in order to increase rapport and observe the intricacies of the social relationships. Given that I only conducted interviews with the female heads of house, participant observation allowed me to observe the cultural discourses within the community. Participant observation also gave me the opportunity to observe how the NGO operated within the community. Field notes were kept in the form of a journal. This tool enabled me to reflect on daily activities, and assisted with the preliminary data analysis. After returning from the field in August 2012, I began the final stages of the data analysis, which included further theoretical reading and reflection on the experience.

4. Chapter Four

4.1. Analysis

4.1.1. *Does this project overburden participants?*

Critics of gender mainstreaming have pointed out that streamlining women into development initiatives often just increases their already large workload and stress, which produces substantially worse human development outcomes (Tiessen 2007 and Hippert 2011). IICCA is cognisant of this WID/gender mainstreaming criticism and this knowledge has played a precautionary role in how the cheese commercialization project was developed. The strategies employed by IICCA to assist in the production and expansion have explicitly tried to avoid increasing the women's work burden. The ultimate goal is to reduce the number of goats each woman has, while increasing yields through improved technique, equipment and higher milk producing breeds.

This point was made on two occasions during the field research. Once, during a lunch celebration (we were celebrating the completion of one of the *queserías familiares*) in which the director of IICCA gave an impassioned speech, emphatically pressing the point that the production process would only become easier as techniques continued to improve, and again during a one on one meeting between Doña T and IICCA's agronomist. During the meeting, Doña T (the oldest woman involved in the initiative) complained about her arthritic hands, and how tending to her herd was getting more and more difficult. IICCA's agronomist assured her that in the next few years her herd of 200 would diminish, perhaps in half. He also assured her that she would still be able to maintain current production yields due to her newly acquired 'English breed' Male.

This breed, identifiable by its longer ears, is considered to be the best for milk production. Doña T had just acquired one over the past year, for this specific purpose, and now with the birth of every *cría* Doña T would be able to thin her heard (by either selling or eating the goats), and keep only the most productive breeds. See the below

photo for an example of a newly born 'English breed' from the most recent *cría* in July 2012. Note the long ears.



Figure 6: Photo credit – Shannon Lambie

During the interviews I asked the women how they felt about the initiative and if they thought the new strategies had made their daily activities more onerous. Two women reported an annoyance with having to change habits, such as using the new equipment, or wearing the plastic gloves and hair covers, but the majority of responses suggested an appreciation for the knowledge transfer and modern equipment. One woman, Doña A, took great pride in telling me how much she had learned, and how much better her cheese production had become. She said that this was the only instance that someone had actually come into her life, and done something only for her. She reported that mayors and other political figures made promises to improve her life, but this was the only time someone had actually followed through. Another woman, Doña S, enthusiastically told me about her experience in Salta (the year before the women had gone on a community exchange with cheese producers in Salta) and how greatly this had impacted her skills and abilities.

Given the interview responses, it appears that the cheese project has not proved to be overly burdensome for the women. I suggest this is the case because the women have always been tending their goats and producing cheese in conjunction with their household obligations. Now, the same tasks are performed, but with the assistance of improved equipment and knowledge. It also appears that beyond not overly burdening

the women, there exists a degree of personal satisfaction, achievement, and happiness with the external recognition of their cheese making skills.

I argue this project avoided the potential pitfall of overburdening women due to the small scale nature of the initiative. Given that IICCA is a department level NGO (and not an international NGO, or even a national NGO) the staff are able to work individually with communities, and personally with the inhabitants within the community. This close proximity and personal connection better enables staff to identify the existing human and cultural capitals. This allows IICCA to utilize local knowledge and facilitate development, rather than impose development. Indeed, since the inception of the project, it has been a process of negotiation with the women in Chaupiuno, with strong community participation and input. I suggest that this also increases the sense of ownership and control felt by the participants.

Also, it is worthwhile to point out that as IICCA is a local NGO, they were able to correctly identify a market for the cheese. During field research, I heard many anecdotal stories of other failed initiatives in which women developed textile or handicraft skills to make souvenirs for tourists. However, the result was unsuccessful due to the nonexistent demand for these products at the local markets.

4.1.2. Does this project essentialize participants?

But there is another salient criticism levied against gender mainstreaming strategies, the potential they have to oversimplify gender relations and essentialize participants into the 'poor woman' identity. On this point I feel less conclusive.

IICCA's close proximity and biweekly visits to Chaupiuno reduces the 'discursive colonial' process (this criticism, put forth by Mohanty in her essay 'Under Western Eyes' (1991), argues that Western organizations can only conceptualize third world women through Western lenses, and thus this process constructs a homogenous third world woman). The ability for IICCA to work one on one with the participants, and to know their individual identities and experiences (for example, that Doña T has arthritic hands), transgresses the monolithic categorizations and considerations seen in larger scale gender mainstreaming strategies.

However, consistent with WID theorization, IICCA did view women as an ‘untapped resource’ for income generation. As well, this project did not incorporate the underlying social norms which dictate gender relations. Peet and Hartwick have labelled this as an ‘add women and stir strategy’, and have questioned the efficacy of such projects for transgressing existing gender norms. Hippert has challenged that this strategy is inattentive to Bolivian cultural traits, as well as to the intersecting relationships of inequality in Bolivian society.

During the early stage of my field research I perceived instances of patriarchy or machismo in daily interactions – particularly highlighted by one husband who approached me to self express his dislike for the cheese project. He explained to me that he was jealous of his wife’s activities outside the home and upset about all of the attention she was getting from the outside community (attention from the likes of the NGO and me) and he would prefer if she would stop going to the courses and workshops. Again, I perceived a similar experience during my semi structured interview with Doña R. Her husband insisted on sitting in on the interview with us, and actually answering all the questions for his wife. Effectively Doña R did not participate in the interview at all.

Although I did initially believe these examples to be demonstrative of Peet and Hartwick’s criticism of gender mainstreaming (that simply adding women to development projects does not transform existing gender relationships), I began to realize it was more complicated, and I began to see validity in Hippert’s argument, that gender mainstreaming, in the Bolivian context, ignores the particularities of Bolivian culture.

I came to realize that gender relations in Bolivia are influenced by *chachawarmi*, a different cultural philosophy than the individualist identity I had conceptualized.

Aymaran anthropologist María Ángela Riveros Pinto describes *chachawarmi* as a socioeconomic and moral phenomenon, which lays the foundation for Bolivian culture, identity, and community. She explains that *chachawarmi* is an identity understood as a unit, comprised of the marriage between a man and a woman (*chachawarmi* literally means ‘manwoman’ in Aymara). She notes that before entering into the *chachawarmi* unit, women and men are not considered ‘fully adult’ or full-fledged members of their

society (2003: 17). Kate Maclean, writing about her experience studying micro finance and women in the Bolivian context, explains that as a part of the complementarity of chachawarmi, “the man is the public face of the partnership and the woman faces inwards” (2010: 506).

This theorization of chachawarmi, particularly that of the inward facing role for the woman and the outwards facing role for the man, sheds analytic light onto the jealousy and unhappiness demonstrated by the husband who approached me. Of course this could just be a ‘natural’ jealous reaction; however, it could also be a reaction to his wife’s public role, which complicates the existing ‘unit’. Again, with the insistence of Doña R’s husband to control her semi structured interview, it could be theorized that he was performing his identity within chachawarmi norms and customs. These norms though, were not integrated into the project. In fact, the project has elected to work exclusively with women, as this has been set out in development literature as being particularly advantageous.

Given this finding, it would appear that, to an extent, this project does oversimplify gender relations through its singular focus on women. This is very consistent with much of the WID and gender mainstreaming theory. However, in an environment where gender identity is deeply bound in the ‘manwoman’ unit, choosing only to focus on women appears incomplete and not particularly holistic. It is this which Hippert has challenged, by stating this style of strategy ignores Bolivian men, ‘another vulnerable, but untargeted, group’ and as a result, such projects have limited ability to advance the underlying social arrangements which frame social interactions.

4.1.3. *But is it empowerment?*

Taking together these two discussions, I return to the question of empowerment. Putting forth a definitive statement as to whether gender empowerment has occurred is difficult, particularly given the wide interpretation of the word and considering that I did not complete any research prior to the inception of this project. However, I will engage with the question of empowerment, utilizing Kabeer’s set of interrelated concepts: agency, resources, and achievements (2003: 171).

Kabeer broadly describes empowerment as a process which increases one's ability to make choices. Speaking to the interrelated concepts, Kabeer explains that agency is how choice is put into effect – and therefore this becomes the central component of the empowerment process. Resources are the medium through which agency is exercised, and achievements refer to the outcomes of the agency. But how does one measure these?

Kabeer states that agency encompasses observable actions in the exercise of choice – decision making, protest, bargaining, and negotiation. This is evident in Chaupiuno, as all decisions made, are made collectively between IICCA and participants. Participants negotiate their individual agreements; some participants have decided strike a deal for infrastructure upgrades, such as a new goat corral, constructed by IICCA. Others prefer to build their own goat corrals. Some women have negotiated on the quantity of cheese they are expected to produce, finding that IICCA's expectations were somewhat unrealistic.

Kabeer also states that agency includes the meaning, motivation, and purpose that individuals bring to their actions. There was a great deal of observable meaning and purpose evident in the interviews with participants, and it appeared this was largely due to the culturally embedded nature of the cheese making. In several interviews, a theme emerged where the women firmly established that caring for goats and making cheese is what they do. It is *their* task, not their husband's, and not anyone else's. Kabeer also points out that this sense of meaning, purpose, and motivation is critically bound up in how the action is seen and recognized by society, and thus, it is clear why participants were quite pleased with the increased recognition of their skills which came with the cheese expansion project.

In respect to resources, Kabeer explains that agency is not exercised in the abstract, but rather through the mobilization of resources – resources are the medium of power. In Chaupiuno, the project was developed through the mobilization of existing resources and the negotiation for new resources. Kabeer establishes that the way resources are distributed depends on the society's ability to define priorities and enforce claims, and thus the method through which individuals gain access to resources is an important indicator of empowerment. The women participating in the project have used

their agency to negotiate with IICCA on the development and expansion of their resources. For example, the initial increase in income from the project has been reinvested by some participants in better resources, such as improved breeds. This, I argue, demonstrates an important exercise of agency to mobilize resources in order to generate increased success.

The final point, achievement, is outcome of the process. Kabeer details that resources and agency make up people's capabilities – their potential for living the life they want. Achievement refers to the extent to which potential is realized or fails to be realized. In this case, the goal of the cheese expansion project has been to avoid outmigration, improve quality of life, and reduce food insecurity. Towards this end, 100% of participants reported that the project had enabled them to do these things. With this evidence, I would argue achievement can be seen, and a process of empowerment has occurred.

In the interest of utilizing this experience as an exemplary model for enacting women's empowerment for food sovereignty, it is crucial to note the importance of certain factors which played fundamental roles in producing this positive outcome. The first factor, as discussed, is the scale of this project, the close proximity between participants and facilitators. The second factor is the asset based nature of this project. This ensures that the development efforts are based in existing human, environment, and cultural capitals, and thus the project consists of facilitation, rather than imposition.

4.2. Gender Empowerment as a Catalyst for Food Sovereignty

I have argued in the first part of this analysis that women's empowerment has been an outcome of the cheese expansion project. In respect to how this process advances Bolivia towards a more food sovereign future, I was able to identify two specific mechanisms.

First, as opposed to simply increasing or improving the existing wage earner's income (the husband) this project has generated an income for a family member where one did not previously exist. This of course, increases overall family income, and more

importantly provides a greater degree of income stability for the family. One hundred percent of the women reported that their overall family incomes had gone up as a result of the project, and agreed that this had enabled their family to continue living in Chaupiuno. In a community where only seven families remain, the women in Chaupiuno are acutely aware of the detrimental outcomes of adverse economic opportunities. In all of the interviews the women expressed mixed feelings on this topic. Although they were grateful to be able to stay in their homes and on their properties, they were disappointed that their community had already lost so much human and cultural capital due to the significant outmigration.

Stemming rural outmigration has been identified a crucial and foundational step in the fight to ensure food sovereignty. Outmigration (or rural depopulation) adds significantly to the burden of food insecurity. Past decades have seen waves of rural producers enter into under serviced urban environments; cease any subsistence food production, and rely solely on cheap, over processed and often non nutritious food products. Olivier De Schutter, Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food for the UN supports this argument, stating, “efforts to combat hunger and malnutrition will fail if they do not produce higher incomes and improved livelihoods for the poorest – particularly small-scale farmers in developing countries” (2011: 222). De Schutter links this directly to reversing the ill effects of outmigration, arguing “[t]his would slow the trend toward urbanization in volatile countries, which is putting stress on their public services. It would contribute to rural development and ensure the succeeding generation can meet its own needs” (2011: 225).

As noted, in Chaupiuno, focusing on income generation for the women was particularly advantageous, as they were previously not involved in economic productivity. Although I was told that in the past some women would occasionally sell excess cheese on the side of the highway, this wasn't a consistent reality due to low yields. Generating a market income was the husband's responsibility, as he had the sole task of the cultivation and sales of the produce at the local market. A livelihood dependant only on produce sales though, has become increasingly less viable in recent years due to irrigation challenges imposed by droughts.

The second mechanism through which this specific project in Chaupiuno has worked to advance towards a more food sovereign environment is by increasing the control that women have over the food procurement process. The increased income that the women garner has been put directly towards *los alimentos que faltan* (interview with Doña B). Consistent with the literature, the women in Chaupiuno are the family food providers, and they go to great lengths to make sure their husbands and children are fed. Putting money directly into the hands of these women means that women now have greater control over purchasing the foods which they lack.

I asked women a little about this particular aspect. First I asked what it was like before this initiative, how did they feed their families? I was told that when food was in short supply it was common for the husband to eat first. The women told me it was the most important to make sure that his portion was adequate. Beyond this, the remaining available food was split among the children and mother, with the mother taking the least.

Prior to this initiative, women have never had direct access to their own finances. The women told me that before, the husband's income was shared equally between the man and the woman. The reality though, is that the items which were purchased were purchased by the husband, who does not have the same role as a food provider. As well, given the previous extreme poverty of Chaupiuno, there would have been little extra funds for food, but yet the women would still be expected to somehow provide for their families, causing considerable stress and feelings of failure during periods of shortcomings.

This finding is echoed in the research of Ndiaye and Outtamara. They report that women are the "providers of food for their family. As such, they experience a greater sense of responsibility and urgency when there is nothing to eat. In a situation of poverty, even if men are supposed to provide money daily, when the man has nothing, he still expects his wife to find something for the family to eat" (2011: 54).

Now that the women of Chaupiuno are in direct control of their funds (as opposed to requesting it from their husbands) they can more easily purchase the food their family needs. This not only decreases hunger, but also the stress women feel to provide for their families.

As I spoke more in depth about the income, and how it impacted the women's lives, I was surprised by the homogeneity between the responses. It was remarkably high, with each woman explaining that she utilized the increased wage to purchase food or supplies for the home. Items such as clothing or entertainment related purchases were never mentioned. The food products which were purchased were also remarkably similar between each family, and included basic staples which were not produced within the community, products such as cooking oil, flour, or fruit.

The investment of this money in food was also meticulously considered, a habit I imagine which came from years of stretching the budget. Expensive foods such as chicken or fish were almost completely avoided (the only meat consumed was goat), rice was bought in bulk, and produce such as mandarins, tomatoes, or bananas were only ever purchased if they were in season and in abundance at the local market. The depth of consideration which went into these purchases, as well as the high degree of detail in which this was explained to me, I believe further demonstrates the women's dedication as a food provider².

When I asked each woman if she believed the income had enabled their family to eat better, 100% of the women responded yes, there wasn't even a moment of consideration in any of the seven interviews. Doña B told me that she couldn't imagine having to go back to before when she didn't have the *ingreso*. She explained how much better it was now that she could buy everything that lacked and how she could even afford to augment her family's daily potatoes, *mote*, and goat meat with bread.

Increasing women's control and access to food (hence increasing their food entitlement or empowerment) has been insisted upon by the food sovereignty literature

² This finding was further amplified through a basic basket consumption survey which was distributed to the women in Chaupiuno as well as to a group of men in a different income generation project in a separate Mancomunidad settlement. The detail in which the women in Chaupiuno completed the survey was astonishing, particularly in comparison with the men, who simply couldn't remember which foods they ate and how often they ate them.

as one of the only methods to successfully alleviate hunger. The evidence presented here, in Chaupiuno corroborates this.

I argue this project bears relevancy for development strategies in the Mancomunidad, due to the largely homogenous social indicators in these four municipalities. Community sizes are comparable across the Mancomunidad, with the large majority of communities numbering less than 25 families. As well, income levels are very low across the board, with 76.6% of Mancomunidad families garnering a wage of only 100 Bs – 1000 Bs per month. This equates to approximately \$14 -140 (see chart below Bohrt 200)

Nivel de ingresos económicos de las familias de la MMHI (2005)

Nivel de Ingresos	Rango (Bs.)	Porcentaje de familias (%)
Ingresos Bajos	de 100 a 1000	76,6
Ingresos Medios	de 1001 a 5000	19,8
Ingresos Altos	de 5001 a más	3,4

Fuente. IICCA 2005.

Figure 7 Economic Income Level for Families in the Mancomunidad (2005)

Incomes remain low across the Mancomunidad for the same reason they were low in Chaupiuno, because families continue to depend on a single income, one which, as Harry Sanabrina explains, became increasingly less viable during the NEP, and worse with climate change and limited access to water. Rates of hunger, as presented in figure 4 in chapter two, are also pervasive and high in each municipality, and therefore the rationale for the project in Chaupiuno could be employed within other communities.

Engaging the female heads of house in other Mancomunidad communities in place-based and asset-based income generation projects would enable the women to procure the foods they need for their families. The generation of a viable wage would also enable the husband to continue producing subsistence crops for consumption and small sales. As a result of this empowerment process, hunger rates should subside. Given that many of these communities are quite small, if this model of development was

employed, the factors which led to success in Chaupiuno would be present. Personal contact and one to one time would increase participant's ability to negotiate their terms and engage in dialogue. This has been shown in the case of Chaupiuno to increase the meaning and motivation that participants bring to the project, further improving success rates.

In respect to this experience serving as an example, it is necessary to acknowledge the high infrastructure and financial capital within the NGO. This style of development would not be possible without the aid donations from Manos Unidas, which means that IICCA is dependent on external actors, which means that it is not self sustaining. This too can be said of the project itself.

The success of the project is largely dependent on the efforts of IICCA. IICCA picks up the cheese every week, and delivers it to the market. Farm to market transportation chains are one of the most problematic barriers facing small producers, therefore IICCA doing the service for no cost is not a realistic situation. IICCA also supplies the producers with gas for their gas stoves. This occurs about once a month. Currently the producers in Chaupiuno do not have mobility, and leaving the community requires waiting for an informal method of transportation (hitchhiking) on the side of the highway.

In 2014 when the project relationship expires, it is possible that the producers will suffer economic setbacks as they will have to address how to get their product to market, as well as how to procure their own production materials. Seeing as the project has generated a considerable amount of income for participants, it is possible that enough capital will be saved to invest into a method of transportation, and this is currently the goal. However, currently, this project is not self sustaining.

5. Chapter Five

Conclusion

In this thesis I have introduced and discussed food sovereignty as an alternative hunger alleviation strategy within the Bolivian context. In part with this discussion, I have drawn attention to a particularly pervasive principle from the literature: the insistence for improved gender equality as a necessary precursor for hunger alleviation. I have endeavoured, in this thesis, to explore this relationship in greater detail, to ask how the principles of this movement create a discourse which empowers women, and how empowered gender relations will manifest for a more food sovereign future.

After the initial discovery that food sovereignty (and its associated ideals) remains yet to be implemented at the state level, I shifted my focus away from a national discourse of food sovereignty and instead sought to analyze the efforts of a more localized organization. IICCA has been working with campesinos on issues related to empowerment, food security, and agroecology for more than thirty years, and as such, their women's specific economic initiative (which is representative of gender mainstreaming practices) in Chaupiuno offered the ideal research environment for the research question. Given the relative uncertainty in the food sovereignty literature surrounding exactly how to enact gender empowerment processes, this case study proved advantageous as the analysis of this specific example could be utilized to put forth theoretical suggestions on the utility of gender mainstreaming in the food sovereignty movement.

With the evidence collected during field work, I argued that a process of empowerment has occurred in Chaupiuno as a result of this economic project, and I have measured empowerment through the utilization of Kabeer's set of interrelating concepts: that of increased agency, resources, and achievement. The success of this

project though, was highly dependent on the close proximity between project participants and project facilitators (a ratio of 7:2 for participants to facilitators).

This close, personal connection was crucial for several reasons. First, this enabled IICCA to identify the existing human and cultural capital in the community, and facilitate an economic expansion project which was deeply embedded in the community. This reduced the often seen outcome of overburdening project participants, as participants were not required to significantly change their tasks or workload. This close proximity also increased opportunities for dialogue and negotiation between facilitators and participants. This increased the level of engagement participants felt with project development and translated into a greater sense of ownership over the project and an increase in meaning and motivation that participants brought to their work. Finally, as IICCA is a department level NGO, they have a high degree of place based knowledge; this ensured that IICCA was able to accurately identify a market for the cheese. Building capacity for a productive initiative in which there was no market has been a major shortcoming in other gender mainstreaming projects in Tarija.

As a caveat to this relatively positive finding, it is important to note that in the Bolivian context, gender mainstreaming (with its singular focus on women) over simplifies gender identity and is not attentive to the particularities of Bolivian culture, specifically the social norm of chachawarmi. As such, the existing social system which influences gender roles remains largely unaffected by the project.

In this thesis I also analyzed how this particular process of empowerment advances Bolivia towards a more food sovereign future. The evidence that I found was highly accordant with the literature's predictions, and thus further validates the insistence on placing women and women's empowerment at the centre of hunger alleviation strategies. Towards this end I identified two specific mechanisms through which women's economic empowerment increases Bolivia's food sovereignty potential. First, by integrating women's existing productive efforts into the moneyed economy, an income is created where one did not previously exist; this of course provides a greater income for the entire family, as well as increased income stability, which makes it possible for campesino families to remain on their rural properties, producing subsistence crops. The second mechanism I identified was, exactly as the literature

predicts, that an increase in women's access to funds produces better hunger alleviation outcomes than simply increasing the original wage earner's (the husband's) income. One hundred percent of women reported that the *ingreso* had improved their food security, and a great deal of emphasis was placed on this. As Doña B put it, she couldn't imagine having to go back to before, when she didn't have the *ingreso*.

It has been my goal in this thesis to clarify whether gender mainstreaming strategies have utility for the food sovereignty movement, and to theorize where the strengths and weaknesses of such an approach lie. What I found was, gender mainstreaming strategies do offer empowerment potential; -however, it is very important that participants have the right to **control** and negotiate the development of such projects, a finding which is very attune with the invariant core of the food sovereignty movement itself. The result of increasing women's control over the development process means that rural women become central to hunger alleviation strategies, and therefore have increased control over the food procurement process, an outcome which has been proven as one of the most effective methods for reducing pervasive hunger.

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Appendices

NCPE Articles Relating to Food Sovereignty

Artículo 16

- I. Toda persona tiene derecho al agua y la alimentación.
- II. El estado tiene la obligación de garantizar la seguridad alimentaria, a través de una alimentación sana, adecuada y suficiente para toda la población.

Artículo 255.8

Seguridad y soberanía alimentaria para toda la población; prohibición de importación, producción y comercialización de organismos genéticamente modificados y elementos tóxicos que dañen la salud y el medio ambiente.

Artículo 309.4

Promover la democracia económica y el logro de la soberanía alimentaria de la población.

Artículo 405

El desarrollo rural integral sustentable es parte fundamental de las políticas económicas del Estado, que priorizara sus acciones para el fomento de todos los emprendimientos económicos comunitarios y del conjunto de los actores rurales con énfasis en la seguridad y la soberanía alimentaria.

Artículo 407.1.

Garantizar la soberanía y seguridad alimentaria, priorizando la producción y el consumo de alimentos de origen agropecuario producidos en el territorio boliviano.

Appendix 2

This was perhaps the first major finding of this research. I make the assertion that a national food sovereignty discourse was not evident for two reasons. First, since the passing of the new constitution in 2009, very little has been done by the National government to implement strategies to help Bolivia become more food sovereign in their production (Gallegos 2012). In fact, Law 144, the “Productive Revolution Law” allows the production, importation, and commercialization of genetically modified products.

Law 144 exists in direct contradiction with Article 255.8 of the NCPE, which guarantees “seguridad y soberanía alimentaria para toda la población; **prohibición de importación, producción y comercialización de organismos genéticamente modificados** y elementos tóxicos que dañen la salud y el medio ambiente. It is likely that Law 144 was passed in order to appease the wealthy Media Luna and the agro-business sector in Santa Cruz. During the field research portion of the trip, I witnessed a march for autonomy in Santa Cruz, in which inhabitants rallied for the right to invoke La Ley de Autonomía, in order to pursue their wealth generation activities which are largely comprised of export oriented production.

In addition to Law 144, the Bolivian government enacted a number of market opening strategies in the immediate post constitution phase, such as two supreme court decrees authorizing the importation of frozen bovine meat, wheat, and wheat flour without the payment of tariffs for six months (Supreme Decree 346) and the authorization of duty free importation of sugar cane and sugar until August of 2011 (Supreme Decree 671 and 770). As well, on August 2, 2011, supreme decree 943 effectively eliminated tariffs for a five year period on all products related to the agricultural sector. These products include seeds, salt for cattle feeding, animal vaccines, animal drugs, and all machinery that might be used during the agricultural process (Office of the United States Trade Representative 2011).

The second reason I suggest that a food sovereignty discourse is lacking is due to the high level of unfamiliarity of the term ‘food sovereignty’ among research participants and NGO staff.

Appendix 3

Cuadro N° 5

**Principales indicadores sociales en los municipios de la
Mancomunidad Héroes de la Independencia (Promedio %)**

Provincia/ Municipio	Vivienda		Servicios e insumos		Insu- ficiencia en edu- cación	Ina- decuada aten- ción en salud
	Inadecuados materiales en vivienda	Insuficientes espacios en vivienda	Inadecuados servicios de Agua y sanea- miento	Inadecuados Insumos energéticos		
<u>Aviléz</u> Uriondo Yunchará	60.1	66.8	60.7	91.3	87.3	26.0
<u>Méndez</u> El Puente San Lorenzo	64.5	68.1	50.1	83.5	86.2	38.2
Tarija	30.4	71.5				

Fuente: INE Censo 2001.